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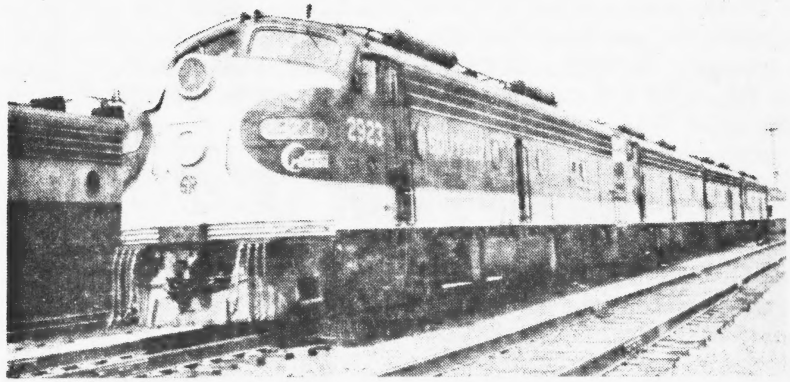

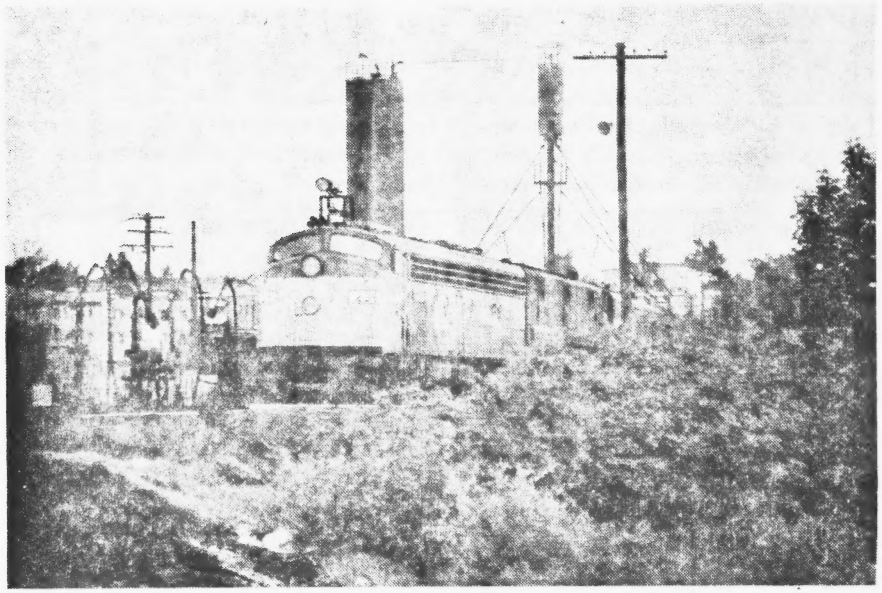

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

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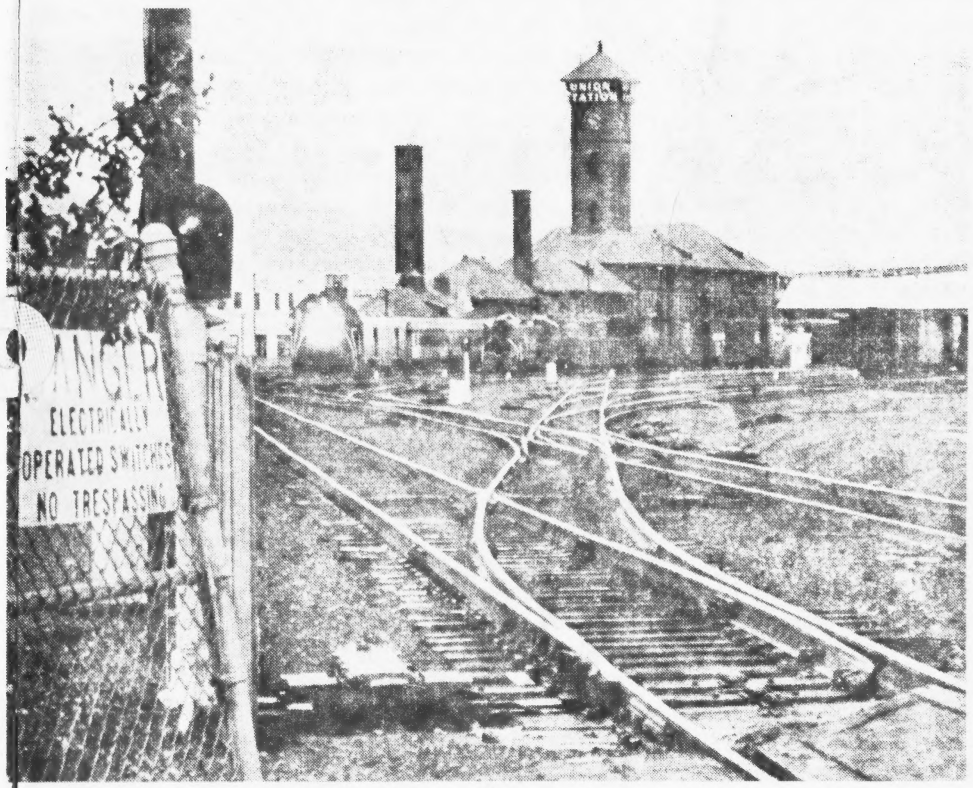
VOL. 2 NO. 15
AUGUST 7, 1972
#41



The Train Is Late:

Amtrak's summer timekeeping

After Transpo 72 -What?

ON THE COVER:

(FRONT COVER) The southbound COAST STARLIGHT pulls out of the Portland, Oregon, station in this photo by George Hyko. The on-time performance of this train is tabulated in an article elsewhere in this issue.

(REAR COVER) Old engines in new paint, both photographed by Paul Rayton in the Washington DC yards in early June. Above, Southern Railway engines in their special paint job for use on the SOUTHERN CRESCENT. Behind them is seen a portion of an RF&P engine. Below, Amtrak engine 235 sits in the Washington yards.

RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER is late again this issue. Last time our lateness was due to vacationing. After publishing the July 17 issue we set about moving our office to larger quarters to serve you better. We have definitely had growing pains this year, and now with more space we should be able to function more efficiently. If you have expected correspondence from us in about the past three weeks and have received none, it was because of our move. We are 'way behind in correspondence now, and can now set about catching up. We certainly appreciate your patience. We have come to discover that rail travelers are a very patient people; how otherwise could they have endured so many years of deteriorating service on the railroads?

If you are seeing RTN for the first time this issue, we must tell you that a more typical issue includes more photographs than does this one. Because our darkroom facilities are just being unpacked from our move, we were unable to prepare more photos for this issue. Next time we should be returned to normal; as Amtrak has said, "We'll have a chance to get organized, and we'll show people what we can do."

Our mailing address is still Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The reluctance on the part of Amtrak's board and management to inject new and aggressive ideas into the running of passenger railroad service can only be explained in terms that assume from the start that the service is unsalvageable. It appears now that Amtrak never intended to actually save the national network of rail service. Instead, it intended to use the 'experimental' period as a time of grace during which railroads would pay a 'buy-in' fee to help taxpayers keep service going until it could be officially laid to rest in I-told-you-so fashion, never proved because never really tested by the 'new' management Congress assigned the job."

--Richard Hebert in The Nation, August 21 issue

"...it's time to wake up to the fact that the great majority of Americans have decisively opted for other modes of personal transportation. The record shows that Americans simply will not use long-distance railroad service in sufficient volume to justify the expense. No amount of promotion or government involvement to 'improve' service will change that situation."

--SP Public Relations Manager Thomas C. Buckley, in letter to the Los Angeles Times, July 15

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STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor at Large; Richard Tower, Research Editor; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; Doug Ellis, East Coast Photographer.

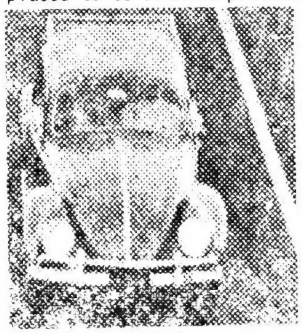
EDITORIAL: AFTER TRANSPO 72 - WHAT?
Plan for a Humanized Transportation System

The Department of Transportation last month told us that our country's transportation system is the best in the world. Such nonsensical statements have come to be expected from bureaucratic agencies, big corporations, and other bastions of vested interests. It seems the DOT would be nearer the truth if it proceeded from the premise that our transportation system is the world's worst. Our railroads are crumbling. Our highways are jammed with cars, trucks, and buses. Our airports are crowded, unsafe, isolated in bad weather, and the constant scene of "skyjackings." Public transit systems are decaying and folding up from financial problems. Brown poisoned air envelopes our cities from choking automobile traffic. Deaths from highway crashes are rising to horrible new heights.

Amid this chaos, government planners are operating at least twenty years behind the times. Here and there we are tentatively told that a new transit system could be ready shortly before the year 2000--if we live that long. And the federal government has just completed an exposition (Transpo 72) of hardware that supposedly will be carrying us from place to place in the future--a hodgepodge of gadgetry that totally misses the mark in terms of the real human needs of our mobile people.

Ranting and raving about problems is one thing--and a necessary step in stirring up corrective action--but actually planning a transportation system that will best serve real people, and then implementing those plans, are much more difficult matters.

We would suggest starting by reading the words of Lewis Mumford (his article, "In Praise of Trains," in the August Harper's Magazine was mentioned here in our last issue). Mumford has a clear and enlightened view of what a "balanced transportation system" really is. Forget those ridiculous "people movers," he says. We agree. Allow for more people to walk and bicycle around cities. We're absurdly lacking in this natural and healthful activity, and our health statistics reflect it. People don't walk because cars have usurped their walking space and generally made cities unpleasant places to be without protective shields of glass and steel.



Still within the city, we suggest intensive exploration of the idea of free public transportation. A system such as BART, for example, should be fare-free for maximum usage and clearing of excess traffic from our cities. The subsidies required for this would probably be less than other more difficult to implement solutions for unclogging cities. Merchants would profit from the increased mobility of customers, especially the old and young who now can get around only with difficulty. New concepts in home delivery of merchandise should be developed. The flexibility and hauling capacity of the auto are largely illusionary--you can't find a parking space, must keep returning to your car, can't load perishables or oversize items, etc.--yet they are among the principal reasons given for continued urban auto usage. Imagine the really flexible urban roamer who can walk or bike, getting on and off free public conveyances, can wander at will and make purchases to be delivered later, without being tied to his auto and timing parking meters. A moment's reflection suggests great possibilities for both purchaser and seller. Wasteful parking lots could be turned into pleasant and useful shopping or park areas. The evidence

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AMTRAK ACCUSED OF LETTING PASSENGER SERVICE DIE

In a very negatively-toned article appearing in the August 21 issue of The Nation magazine, Washington free-lance writer Richard Hebert has charged that Amtrak is in reality getting ready to cut back service to just the Northeast Corridor when its two-year experimental period ends next year. He said that Amtrak's Board of Directors and its management team are "heavy with the voices of the cautious who have every reason to hold preconceived notions that railroad passenger service is unrevivable as a national system, and that only urban 'corridor' service is worth any large investment of time, energy, funds or brainpower." The article is one of the most cutting indictments of Amtrak's management yet to appear. The writer is apparently pro-passenger train (he is the author of a forthcoming book, "Highways to Nowhere: The Politics of City Transportation"), but he has little or nothing positive to say about present service. For example, there are no statistics on the unexpectedly good financial showing of a number of long-distance trains. (See further quote on page 2.)

NUMEROUS AIR CONDITIONING FAILURES PLAGUE PASSENGER TRAINS

RTN has so far this summer received an inordinately large number of reports of failures of air conditioning on Amtrak trains, involving both refurbished and non-refurbished cars. Steve Farrar's column in this issue reports some. Locally, riders on the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR have frequently reported gross failures of A-C units--not in isolated cars, but in most cars of a consist. In at least one instance, the outside temperature in California's Central Valley was reaching 110° while nearly every car of the train traversing the valley had no A-C and was almost equally hot. A rider on the COAST STARLIGHT this month reported that southbound from Portland to Oakland she was fortunate to be in the only car with operative A-C. One lady passenger on the SF ZEPHYR became ill and nauseated from the heat last month.

The reports are too frequent and widespread to represent isolated instances. It is known that the railroads stopped maintaining cars sometime before Amtrak was to start up and make its selection of cars to purchase. It is said by some who have studied the situation that usually no maintenance is done under Amtrak, and that old units, even in supposedly refurbished cars, are simply giving up the ghost. This serious problem will evidently require much careful attention from Amtrak if they are to achieve their stated goal of making the trains worth riding again.

"ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL" TO RUN THIS FALL

(The following item is excerpted from "The Nashville Flyer," newsletter of the Nashville Chapter, NRHS:) A new Amtrak train, the ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL, will begin operation on Sept. 10 between Chicago and Florida. The route will be the same as the FLORIDIAN (scheduled to cease operation Sept. 9) and the former SOUTHWIND. Selection of the Chicago-Indianapolis-Louisville-Nashville-Birmingham-Montgomery-Jacksonville-Miami-St. Petersburg route came as very good news to many who had heard rumors that Amtrak would remove its Chicago-Florida train from its current route. Amtrak was considering running the train from Chicago to Birmingham on the route of IC's CITY OF MIAMI, with the route south of Birmingham remaining the same. This would have left Nashville and Louisville without rail service and would have greatly reduced service to Indianapolis. The tentative schedule of the train is: lv Chicago 8:30am, ar Miami 10:55pm; lv Miami 8am, ar Chicago 8:55pm.

East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar

RIDING THE FLORIDIAN. The three of us were all very tired. We had spent the previous day cutting coal on the tender of Southern engine 4501 from Knoxville to Louisville. In the second place, we were all nearly broke. But I had convinced my friends not to make the all-night bus ride back to Knoxville. I was going all the way to Montgomery. I told them we could charge all our rail tickets on my Rail Travel Card.

Imagine my opinion of Amtrak when, at 6:45am on July 24, I called Louisville Union Station to have them fix up the tickets and was told "Well, the L&N doesn't honor any credit cards. The Pennsylvania does, but the L&N doesn't." Was this 1972? As far as Louisville Union Station was concerned it might as well have been 1927. No Penn Central. No Amtrak. And no credit.

Why is it that everything Amtrak brags about--credit cards, good equipment, on-time performance--never seems to exist on the day you make your trip? Nevertheless, I will try to be objective. We went to the station to spend our last dimes on train fare. And we did appreciate the convenience of not having to wear our military uniforms to buy furlough fare tickets--thanks to Amtrak. It would have taken the railroads 10 years to follow the lead of the airlines on this policy.

Penn Central brought the FLORIDIAN in from Chicago at 7:10am (E.T.), a half-hour early on a very padded schedule. At 7:50am, departure time, a man arrived to work on the broken gas stove in the diner, and at 7:57 we pulled out with the stove repaired and breakfast cooking. The consist was a PC E unit, B&O E unit, SCL baggage-dormitory, SP diner-lounge, PC sleeper "Toronto Islands," L&N SOUTH WIND coach, and an SCL coach.

The train was almost full, but the air conditioning was not working in the rear car --SCL coach 5130. I had met a man on the steam trip the day before who had ridden this same consist from Montgomery to Nashville on July 22, and the air conditioning was broken then also. The car hadn't been repaired during the 15-hour Chicago layover, nor had it been replaced. It would be interesting for RTN readers to watch for this car in their train travels. Just drop a note to us if the air conditioning is still out. The doors were broken also.

We all had a fine breakfast in the diner as the train raced south out of Louisville. Since the diner crew were from the Seaboard Coast Line instead of L&N, the Rail Travel Card was pressed into service. It was clear that the engineer we had was a pro and he was trying to make up that 7-min delay. Whenever a curve required him to reduce from 79mph, he drew off just enough air to bring the train smoothly into and through the curve. Every freight was in the siding for us. After a while a trainman came through and announced: "The next stop is Bowling Green in 10 miles. We'll be there in about 7 minutes." At least between Louisville and Nashville, if nowhere else on the FLORIDIAN's route there was some fast moving and there was that "sense of urgency" that is so lacking in passenger railroading. We were on time at Bowling Green.

About 8:45am Central Time (9:45 Eastern Stomach Time) we headed for the diner again for a Coke. The waiter who had been so courteous before said simply: "No Coke. We're still serving breakfast." We waited an hour in the lounge before we dared to get his attention again, and this time he served us.

We pulled into Nashville at 10:05am, another half-hour early arrival on the slow schedule. I took advantage of the 40-min layover to photograph the fascinating station, and was immediately recognized as a railfan by two local railfans. They ex-

plained that the waiting room was barricaded because the glass ceiling was falling bit by bit. They said the Nashville Union Station had been declared a landmark and that they hoped it could be fixed up in Gay 90's style, with a restaurant and possibly offices, with Amtrak to remain as a minor tenant. But their biggest concern was hearing from several sources that the FLORIDIAN was to be transferred to the Illinois Central between Chicago and Birmingham, thus bypassing Indianapolis, Louisville and Nashville and serving no comparable-size cities. They said they were sympathetic with Amtrak's desire to avoid the bad PC track between Chicago and Louisville, but they felt that instead of using IC that Amtrak should use the L&N (C&EI) Dixie Route between Chicago, Evansville and Nashville, with connecting service between Detroit, Cincinnati, Louisville and Nashville. In Nashville, I learned that L&N agents had received information on credit cards about a month earlier, but were waiting for imprinters, or something. However, the Rail Travel Card is still not to be honored on L&N.

At noon I went into the diner for lunch. Toasted sandwiches and soup was the extent of the offering, but the food was good and the passengers seemed satisfied. The crew said that the air conditioning in the diner had just failed. They also said that all their ice cream had melted.

At Cullman, AL, we went into the siding for the northbound FLORIDIAN, which was running almost 2½ hours late. It had an L&N E unit, SCL baggage-dorm, SP diner-lounge, Amtrak sleeper and SCL and UP coaches. Incidentally, the baggage-dorm on the FLORIDIAN handles first class mail between Chicago and Jacksonville.

We were 5mins late into Birmingham, where a man tried to fix the air conditioning in the coach and the diner, but was unable to do so. I went downstairs to examine the modern L&N station, built about 10 years ago. I wondered why the Southern built its own new depot a couple years ago when Terminal Station was torn down, because the SOUTHERN CRESCENT runs right past the L&N station. And on days when the CRESCENT runs to or from New Orleans, it must make a backing move to enter the Southern station. Using the L&N station would save about 15mins for the SOUTHERN CRESCENT and would be a great help to passengers. For example:a lady en route from Washington to Montgomery boarded the FLORIDIAN; I overheard her griping about having to make the taxi ride across town in Birmingham. She also said that they didn't tell her in Washington that she was going to have to change stations. Of course they didn't. Neither Southern nor Amtrak show in timetables the identity of the stations they use in Birmingham.

As the day wore on, conditions in the rear coach became unbearable. The heat was intense, and the car floor was coated with roadbed dust. The crew never transferred passengers to other available space in the other coach or sleeper, altho some passengers moved on their own. We went into a siding for a freight, and were 23mins late into Montgomery. Montgomery Union Station, incidentally, has been sold to the city for a railroad museum. A new Amtrak station is to be built about 25 yards north of the trainshed.

There were some plus points about the trip. My ride in the air-conditioned coach was fine, the scenery and the small towns were interesting, the food was good and reasonably priced, we were delayed by a freight only once, speed generally was 65 to 79mph, and patronage was fairly good. Amtrak made a wise decision when it changed the FLORIDIAN to an evening departure from Chicago. For example, one passenger was enroute from Butte to Birmingham, another from Los Angeles to Nashville. In past years such travelers would have had to wait overnight in Chicago.

(continued on page 11)

Mixed Train of Thoughts

PAUL RAYTON, our Editor-at-Large, is currently at large, traveling around Canada and the U.S. by train, and will hopefully bring us some exciting reports later on..... SUPER CHIEF got new menus about August 19, reports reader Mark Weinberger. He describes them as "huge purple affairs with an ATSF F unit portrayed on the cover in silver." The menu inside is on parchment-type paper, and the dinner lists 5 entrees with numerous ala carte items, and, lo and behold, the Champagne Dinner is still there. Did you hear that, Paul Rayton, wherever you are? The breakfast menu also preserves many of the Santa Fe favorites, including the French Toast..... AMTRAK RECENTLY issued a "Crew & Accommodations Information" folder given out on trains. It explains who each crew member is by his uniform and describes different types of accommodations ..... RICHMOND, FREDERICKSBURG & Potomac Railroad has joined the ranks of the public-be-damned railroads with their claim that commuter trains could not run on their lines in Northern Virginia without interfering with freight operations. The truth is that their track is highly under-utilized. There is a 6-7-mile-long double-track passenger-only bypass of the Potomac Yards (about which the RF&P is so concerned) that now is used by only 14 trains per day. Twenty years ago far more passenger trains were run here than the number of commuters proposed with no problem for freight. In fact the RF&P ran far more passenger trains all the way to Richmond that commuter trains it is being asked to run only to Woodbridge and Quantico..... WANT INFORMATION on Amtrak's service to Vancouver? Phone (604) 682-5552 in Vancouver or (206) 623-6933 in Seattle ..... AMTRAK'S NICE brochures, "Traveling by Train" and "What is Amtrak?" can also be had by writing to Amtrak at P.O. Box 474, Riverdale, Maryland 20840..... TRAVEL AGENT in the San Francisco area wrote Amtrak in Washington for a June 11 timetable when they were about to be published, and finally received one July 13 by third class mail, with one-third of Amtrak's "last?" summer already spent..... NO SERVICE at all is what the state of Arkansas currently gets from Amtrak. So many of its citizens have been working to get Amtrak's forthcoming route to Mexico set thru Arkansas following a slightly altered route of the former TEXAS EAGLE. We hope to have a detailed report on the status of the Mexican service in the next issue of RTN..... LOS ANGELES Times recently published a letter from an SP official restating the old Biaggini anti-passenger train line (see QUOTES, page 2). This elicited a barrage of replies of which the Times published a handful July 29 under the heading "People want trains with good service." And we know of more letters that didn't get printed..... FLYING SCOTSMAN was moved out of San Francisco because it wasn't making money in the location it was given. It was hauled across the bay on a Western Pacific barge, and on August 13 left Oakland under its own power to run to Stockton over WP, with some invited guests aboard. It will be in storage near Stockton for awhile..... AMTRAK LOST only $111 million its first year, it was reported early this month. The original prediction was that it would lose $154 million during that time..... SF ZEPHYR, both trains 5 & 6, were detoured over Western Pacific tracks in Utah July 29--the first known instance of an Amtrak train using WP rails. Also, the northbound COAST STARLIGHT of June 30 was detoured via Chico in the Sacramento Valley over freight-only SP lines, setting some kind of precedent. Both detours were brought about by freight derailments..... RUMOR IS that five trains will be running on the SAN DIEGAN route this fall, two of

(continued on page 10)

The Train Is Late: Amtrak's summer timekeeping

The title of this report is taken from a humorous skit put on by a Los Angeles underground FM station just before Amtrak took over the trains. In it a Soviet agent traveling by train in the U.S. is given a password by which to identify his "contact." The password is "The train is late." Of course he is unable to find his contact because of the ubiquitousness of the phrase. We found the phrase used too often this summer also. Every time we had occasion to check the COAST STARLIGHT at Oakland, the train would be behind schedule. So we compiled these data from non-Amtrak sources to satisfy our curiosity about how badly the timekeeping was really going during the heavy summer travel season. Recall that in the Jan. 3 issue we published data gathered at Los Angeles that indicated that timekeeping broke down altogether when the railroads had to cope with large numbers of people traveling. During the Christmas season the STARLIGHT never once arrived on time in the City of Angels, and averaged over 3 hours late. Our report was widely quoted, and after the winter travel season things got better. The first quarter of 1972 showed many timekeeping improvements over the Amtrak system, but that was a slack travel time, and we were keeping our fingers crossed about the coming summer season. Would the system break down again when more people were riding? Here, then, are data on some Western routes for the period of June 30 to August 16, with some days' tallies missing.

TRAIN	ARRIVAL POINT	% ON TIME	AVG. MINS. LATE	# RUNS	# DAYS MISSING
SUNSET LIMITED #1	Los Angeles	82	90	17	3
SUNSET LIMITED #2	New Orleans	47	123	17	3
S.F. ZEPHYR #5	Oakland	84	86	43	5
S.F. ZEPHYR #6	Ogden	78	52	37	11
COAST STARLIGHT #11-12	Los Angeles	13	72	15	6
COAST STARLIGHT #13-14	Portland	56	90	18	2
COAST DAYLIGHT #12	Los Angeles	81	86	21	6
COAST DAYLIGHT #13	Oakland	95	103	23	4

It is obvious that the worst performance on the routes tallied was put in by the COAST STARLIGHT. The southbound train was on time only 13% of occasions (on time was defined as within 15 minutes of timetable schedule). The northbound train reached Portland (and presumably was late at Seattle as well) behind schedule close to half of the days it ran, and when both trains were late they averaged over an hour of tardiness. However, the eastbound SUNSET LIMITED was a close contender for the dubious record of worst timekeeper, as it arrived in New Orleans on time less than half of the time, averaging over two hours late (the range of tardiness was from 20 minutes to 8 hours, 5 minutes; two of the late trains, times not counted in the average lateness, were annulled before reaching their end point because of freight derailments, and passengers were bused on). The lateness of the northbound STARLIGHT ranged from 30 minutes to 5 hours, 35 minutes, the latter due to a freight derailment.

The 4-times-a-week COAST DAYLIGHT, with the shortest route, was the best performer in our table. One train each direction was annulled once due to freight derailments, and both trains were once late a little over 4 hours due to freight wrecks.

The table does not indicate that the southbound STARLIGHT gathered much of its lateness while operating over the Burlington Northern. It left Portland late 11 out of 15 times, presumably usually because of late arrival from Seattle. The range of that tardiness was from 20 minutes to 1 hour, 16 minutes. However, it frequently made up time before reaching Oakland, since only 6 of 15 times was it late arriving there, but then it tended to drop behind schedule again between Oakland and Los Angeles, with 13 out of 15 L.A. arrivals being behind time.

To put these times into perspective with earlier Amtrak data, we have averaged our figures for each route as a whole (both directions) and made the assumption that the missing data wouldn't change the averages. Here's a table that includes Amtrak's figures from the last two quarters of 1971 and the first quarter of this year. We also show our figures from last Christmas season (for L.A. arrivals only, where applicable):

ROUTE	1971 3rd Q	1971 4th Q	1972 1st Q	1972 summer	1971 Xmas
Seattle-San Diego	10	50	66	36	0
Chicago-Oakland	44	51	83	81	-
New Orleans-Los Angeles	56	49	73	65	29
Oakland-Los Angeles	72	77	90	86	50

All figures are percent on time

The above table shows a general improvement over the course of time from the third quarter of last year to the first quarter of this year. It must be remembered, however, that the first quarter of the year is the slowest travel season, including neither summer, Easter season, nor Christmas vacation. Our summer figures should be compared with the third quarter of last year, as they overlap a comparable period. Such a comparison shows that an improvement over 1971 has taken place. However, at least half of the routes we have examined still show an unexceptably low level of performance. Only about a third of the trains on the Seattle-San Diego route are running on time this summer, though it's undoubtedly better than the one-in-ten of last summer. And it's much better than the complete strikeout that occurred on the route last Christmas.

On the other hand, comparing our summer 1972 figures with Amtrak's figures for the first three months of this year (the latest they have released), there has been a decline in performance on every route. In many cases the trains left their origins late because of equipment breakdowns and late connecting trains. However, it is our impression that little effort is made on some of these trains to make up lost time--there is no "sense of urgency" about the operations. Frequently no one seems to be in charge at large stations, and a train sits there longer than the scheduled time even though everyone is aboard and there seems no earthly reason for delaying further. Yet workers wander about with their heads in the clouds, and there is no supervision of their operations.

Clearly Amtrak has a tremendous timekeeping problem on some of its routes. It still has not gained a firm hand over its operations, even after 16 months. In only 8 months the 2-year "experiment" will be over, and there will be intense pressure to eliminate many long-distance routes. The inexcusable bad performance, coupled with the many problems of malfunctioning equipment enroute, add up to a situation where many passengers will forsake train travel having tried it, perhaps for the first time, under Amtrak. This is the last summer of Amtrak's experimental period, and things are very little better than the first summer. Amtrak has clearly not gotten organized yet, as it said it would, and if it is now showing "what it can do," then things look mighty bad for a continuation of long-distance train travel in this country.

(continued from page 7)
them running a nonstop trip in 2 hours, 15 minutes. Wanna hear an even more interesting rumor? It is said that Amtrak is considering running excursions to San Onofre Beach (between San Diego and San Clemente), and that Santa Fe would provide a steam engine for the runs..... PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, Amtrak's new train to Vancouver, carries an ex-Zephyr dome roam observation car, in Amtrak paint, to which a vestibule diaphragm has been affixed on a box-like structure. It has a drumhead, and the upper dome windows have been painted over! When Paul Rayton rode it early this month, the remaining windows were, he said, either dirty or fogged. Also, the air conditioning functioned erratically..... AMTRAK BUS connection tickets from Long Beach to Los Angeles Union Station are now sold at the Consolidated Bus Depot at 202 E. Ocean Blvd. in Long Beach..... CULTURAL HERITAGE Board of Los Angeles declared Los Angeles Union Station an historic-cultural monument early this month ..... FLASH! MORE news on the rumored San Onofre excursions: they are definite (don't know about the steam engine), and should be starting about now. They are designed to carry underprivileged children from Los Angeles to that beach area, and were initiated by William Penn Mott Jr., director of California's Dept. of Parks and Recreation. They represent a one-month trial project, and may be repeated next summer if successful. Amtrak will run them, and the subsidizing of the runs was not explained..... TURBO TRAIN enlarged to carry 240 passengers was at last report to have begun running August 7 between New York and Boston. It was to have made a trial run August 4 between Providence and Boston..... THE CLAMDIGGER, the rail diesel car commuter that formerly ran between New London and New Haven, Conn., was discontinued last Jan. 28 (see RTN, Feb. 7). Then its supporters, 200-strong, formed a group known as the Shore Trains Association. They met with Amtrak and Representative Robert Steele late in July to work out details of improving train service thru the coastal area. So Amtrak has agreed to provide three stops at Old Saybrook starting Sept. 11: the EAST WIND and the SOUTHERN CRESCENT will stop eastbound, and the COLONIAL westbound. Amtrak is also considering adding a new morning train from Providence to New York with stops in New London and Old Saybrook, and to reschedule train 174 to stop in Old Saybrook at 5:35pm..... JOE VRANICH of NARP will be in Los Angeles and San Francisco this month to give a speech entitled "Amtrak--Problems and Prospects." The L.A. meeting has already taken place, but the S.F. meeting will be Aug. 30 at the S.F. Hilton at 7pm in the California Room. All rail travelers are invited..... PRAIRIE STATE in early July, reports Mark Weinberger, had air conditioning problems. A 95° car on a bumpy track is not exactly conducive to bringing train travelers back again. The parlor car no longer runs on the train. The ABE LINCOLN was a different story, he says--one of his most enjoyable trips in months; excellent diner and fine dome parlor-observation car..... RTN READER riding the COAST DAYLIGHT this month talked the intoxicated lounge car attendant into loaning him the keys to the mail box in the ex-SCL observation. In it were 2 letters and 10 postcards written in 1961! He mailed them, and we expect some surprised recipients..... AUTO-TRAIN has added four former Western Pacific dome coaches to its trains, it announced August 17. The cars will be used as combination coach-lounge cars..... SENATOR LOWELL Weicker, who roundly criticized Amtrak recently for its timidity, has appeared on NBC in support of the bill to give some highway funds for rapid transit. His remarks were reprinted in the Philadelphia Inquirer Aug. 8, and make very sensible and colorful reading.....

EAST COAST REPORT (continued from page 6)

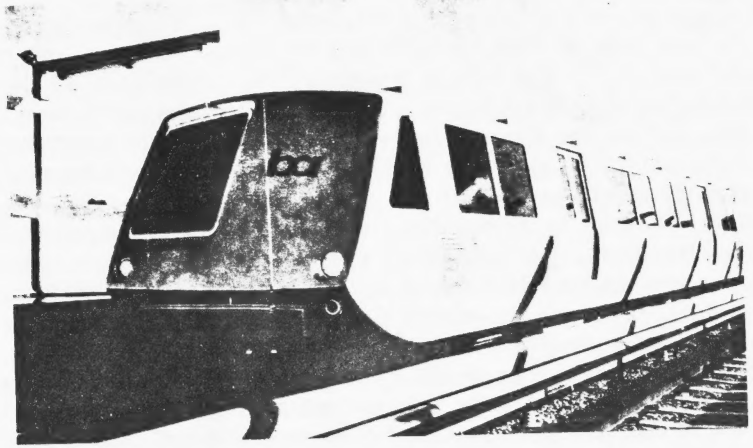
AUTUMN SCHEDULE change for Amtrak trains:
In addition to previous reports published in RTN, these changes are presently contemplated for the fall: The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR will run every-other-day between San Francisco and Denver, rather than daily or tri-weekly. The MERCHANTS LIMITED will run Boston-Washington on Sundays only, and the BUNKER HILL will run Washington-Boston on Mondays only, with no time changes. The remainder of the week, the operation will be between Boston and Philadelphia. The TURBOTRAIN will likely leave Boston about an hour later than its preently scheduled time.

The FLORIDIAN will return to its traditional schedule with an 8:55am departure from Chicago and 8am from Miami. The SILVER METEOR will be split at Savannah, with the Miami section running via the Baldwin cutoff to Waldo and south. The CHAMPION section will run to St. Petersburg via Jacksonville and Orlando. The date for changeover to fall schedules on the Amtrak system is September 10.

POTOMAC SPECIAL will remain after the end of the one-year "experiment" in September. Incidentally, food service on the train is now usually provided by a nicely refurbished ex-C&O diner-coach. Perhaps the "sandwiches-on-a-board" service experienced by Paul Rayton in June (see RTN, July 3) was only temporary while the regular car was being refurbished.

MISCELLANY: THE STATE of Virginia has a Department of Transportation now. Its primary project is the Washington-Richmond route for high-speed service, and if that appears promising, the potential for the Richmond-Norfolk section... ACTUAL CONVERSATION with a ticket agent June 11: RTN: "Do you have the June 11 timetables?" Agent: "No." RTN: "Do you have the June OFFICIAL GUIDE?" Agent: "Not yet." RTN: "Did you get any advance notice of schedule changes from Amtrak?" Agent: "We never get anything from Amtrak except fare changes." RTN: "Did you get any schedule changes from the railroad?" Agent: "No." RTN: "Well, what do you tell the public?" Agent: "I just tell them what I saw in the newspapers. Other than that, I just hope the schedules haven't changed"... NATIONAL LIMITED westbound July 15 observed at Harrisburg, PA, was 1hr 15mins late and had all coaches filled except the last. The air conditioning was working properly in the two sleepers and the Los Angeles coach, half-way in an SP coach, and not at all in the PC diner, the 3 SCL coaches and the Amtrak coach on the rear... FLOOD REPORTS: As of July 15, the Philadelphia-Harrisburg Silverliner trains were making their full runs only in the early morning and late afternoon. Midday trains were running only Philadelphia-Lancaster to facilitate repair of flood-damaged track, with connecting bus to Harrisburg. BROADWAY LIMITED service was expected to resume July 19. The BROADWAY and the NATIONAL LTD had been running Washington-Philadelphia, combining there with the trains from New York for the runs west. For this purpose, trains 31 and 41 were backed into 30th St. station. Newport News-Charlottesville Amtrak rail service was resumed July 11... BECAUSE OF slowness in making decisions, the Amtrak summer travel season may be missed entirely before the New York-Montreal route is opened. The same will be true of the Mexican route... RECENT AMTRAK press release begins: "An important feature in the annals of Americana is the 'unhurried, unworried, and unwearied' way countless Americans used to travel by train to explore the scenic wonders of their homeland. This summer 1972, droves of vacation-bound Americans are rediscovering this thrill, but this time, through the broad, clear windows of an Amtrak train"...

Urban-Suburban Transit



BART OPENING SET FOR SEPTEMBER 11

The Oakland - Fremont line of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system will open to the public on Monday, September 11. Ribbon-cutting ceremonies will occupy the morning, and the first paying passengers will board at noon. On that day, 15 years of planning and 8 years of building will be behind the $1.4 billion system. As of this writing, BART has 32 cars, enough to run on the 28-mile line that is the first section of the system to be opened. On August 23, eight trains were placed in operation without paying passengers in order to run them until opening day just as they will operate starting Sept. 11. Initially the line will run 6am to 8pm weekdays, and will be closed weekends.

August 19 the downtown Berkeley BART station was opened for public inspection. Crowds passed thru the handsome arched subway station, reminiscent of Russian subways, while BART personnel passed out brochures and balloons and explained the operation of the system to potential riders. The line from Oakland to Berkeley, with terminal at Richmond, will open this fall. Berkeley has two other BART stations, both in subways.

ONE VOTE KILLS FUNDS FOR MASS TRANSIT

By a vote of 8 to 7, the Senate Public Works Committee has apparently fatally killed a bill which would allow some of the Highway Trust Fund money to be used for rail rapid transit construction. Senator Robert T. Stafford, Republican of Vermont, cast the deciding vote August 10 after having changed his mind overnight. He had voted for the measure the day before. The bill still might pass the Senate when it reaches the floor, but the probability is diminished with the influential committee's negative stamp on it.

STUDY OF SAN FRANCISCO - SACRAMENTO CORRIDOR TRAVEL

About 40 transit experts from California have been invited by the state to compete for $600,000 to do a study of future transportation systems between San Francisco and the state capitol. It is apparently the first time that a "corridor" will be defined and created, as it were--the area extending from San Jose to Santa Rosa and east to Sacramento and Stockton. (In the Northeast Corridor, a conglomerate of cities already existed, while the California cities are at present partially widely separated.)

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Maybe this idea explains why Mr. Lewis is praising the railroad employees so highly. Amtrak needs their political clout to keep the money coming. It also explains why Amtrak isn't doing anything about what was by most observers declared to be among the top two or three passenger train problems--the problem of excessive crew cost.

John R. Pawson

Willow Grove, Pa.

I enjoyed Paul Rayton's travel report in the July 3 RTN. But I am dumbfounded at the conditions he encountered. Did he obtain numbers of the poor cars, names of the incompetent and/or impolite personnel, etc.? All of the evidence which he collected simply must be made available to the appropriate Congressmen steering Amtrak-related legislation and investigations. Are you filing a report with NARP? Did you cite your accumulated data for the benefit of Amtrak?

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(Ed. note: RTN is read by Amtrak, by NARP, by DOT officials, and by a number of national and state legislators, among others in decision-making positions. They must be aware of all our comments. However, don't let this fact defer you from making your own comments available to the appropriate officials.)

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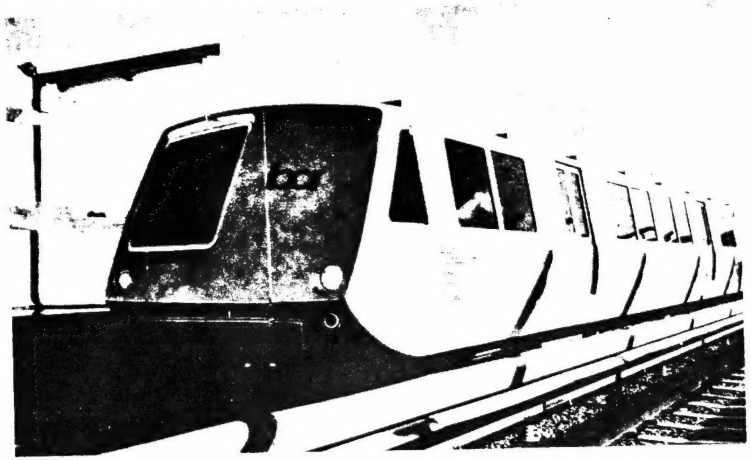
Also, two of our cars have been attached to regular trains on two of our excursions. Our diner "Starlight Cafe" (ex-UP coffee shop-lounge) was used on our San Diego excursion July 22 on the rear of SAN DIEGANS 776 and 775, and one of our sleepers, "Imperial Bird" (ex-UP), was used on the CHIEF August 3-4 and 6 on our Denver excursion, to Trinidad eastbound and from La Junta westbound.

Kenneth Ruben, Director
Pacific Railroad Society

Los Angeles, Cal.

Urban-Suburban Transit



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AFTER TRANSPO 72 (continued from page 3)

shows that when pedestrian malls are created, business improves, contrary to merchants' initial suspicions.

Traveling between cities should be equally pleasant and efficient, though now it rarely is. There is obviously no substitute for airplanes for very fast travel. However, as Mumford points out, speeds have now reached the point where electronic communication--as for business meetings--would be more efficient; meet over closed-circuit TV instead of rushing madly across the country.

The greatest need in inter-city travel is for the diverting of auto passengers onto rails. The same is true of large freight, as Mumford reminds us. Passenger train speeds are of course currently inadequate. An investment in roadbed and equipment to bring our passenger rail system up to foreign standards is needed quickly. But we don't need fantastically high speeds for passenger trains; says Mumford: they would draw too many people off airplanes and create another imbalance of the system. And from the human standpoint, we don't want to be shot through tubes at 500mph. Such a crackpot engineering scheme completely overlooks the pleasant catering to human needs that passenger trains are capable of, and which should be the primary criterion in designing travel systems.

The ridiculous distinction between "long-haul" and "corridor" trains should be dropped. This functions only as bureaucratic doubletalk that translates as "Let's keep the Northeast Corridor trains because Penn Central is bankrupt and drop everything else so as not to upset our friends the railroad managers." A train is a vehicle that runs on rails and carries people and/or things between various points on the map. If I want to go from New York to Washington or from Chicago to Phoenix, I don't make any distinction between the trains I ride. In either case I have the same travel needs and expect similar service on either route. Let's not let Washingtonian gobbledygook wash out my travel needs as a human being.

In short, what we desperately need--and need some time well before the year 2000--is something like a return to the sanity of travel that existed in the 1920's and 1930's, only better. We need cities that we can move around in as human beings, and vehicles that we can travel the country in as human beings without discomfort and fear for our lives. We need to open up avenues of physical mobility to everyone who wants them.

One assumes that soon there will be certain warmaking and space-boondoggling industries that will be without federal financial support. If these old dogs could be taught new tricks, why not let the federal government encourage them to get into the business of rebuilding our avenues of travel. Lay new rails, build new trains, replace city-clogging freeways with beautiful walking-biking ways and transit systems, landscape streets, place utilities underground--let our nation truly become number one in the beauty, ease and human freedom of living and moving that its citizens possess.

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